In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) Process for separating an emulsion of a bituminous oil and water into a liquid water phase and a liquid bituminous oil phase, wherein the following steps are performed:
(a) raising the temperature of the bituminous oil/water emulsion having a temperature of below 100 °C to a temperature of above 140 °C, and
(b) performing a phase separation wherein a liquid water phase and a liquid bituminous oil phase are obtained, wherein the heating of the emulsion in step (a) is effected by first mixing part of liquid bituminous oil phase obtained in step (b) having a temperature of above 140 °C with the bituminous oil/water emulsion and subsequently raising the temperature of the resulting mixture to a temperature of about 140 °C by making use of indirect heat exchange means.

2. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1, wherein in step (a) the temperature is raised to a value of between 140-200 °C.

3. (Previously presented) The process of claim 2, wherein in step (a) the temperature is raised to a value of between 160-200 °C.

4. (Previously presented) The process of claim 3, wherein the temperature of the resulting mixture is raised from a value of between 120-150 °C to a value of between 160-180 °C by making use of the indirect heat exchange means.

5. (Previous presented) The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure in step (b) is sufficiently high in order to obtain both phases in the liquid state.

6. (Previously presented) The process of claim 5, wherein in step (b) the liquid water phase has a pH of below 7.

7. (Previously presented) The process of claim 6, wherein the pH of the liquid water phase is between 4 and 6.

8. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1, wherein the starting emulsion has a water content of between 1-40% by weight, a surfactants content of between 0.01-5% by weight and an oil content of between 60-85% by weight, wherein the oil alone has a viscosity of above 305 Pa.s at 20 °C.

9. (Previously presented) The gasification process for preparing synthesis gas, wherein a liquid bituminous oil is obtained according to the process of claim 1 and wherein said liquid bituminous

oil, having a temperature of above 140 °C, is fed to a gasification unit in which synthesis gas is obtained.

Claims 10-18 (canceled).

19. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 9, further comprising:

feeding liquid bituminous oil obtained from said performing step (b) to a gasification burner means with oxygen whereby a partial oxidation takes place to form a hot synthesis gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen.

20. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 19, further comprising:

lowering the temperature of said hot synthesis gas.

21. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein said hot synthesis gas is at a temperature between 1300 °C to 1500 °C and the lowered temperature of said hot synthesis gas is between 300 to 350 °C.

22. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein the lowering of said hot synthesis gas is done by indirect heat exchange means.

23. (Previously presented) A process for separating an emulsion comprising bituminous oil and water into a liquid water phase and a liquid bituminous phase, wherein said process comprises:

mixing a part of an oil phase with said emulsion having an emulsion temperature to yield a mixture having a mixture temperature;

raising said mixture temperature of said mixture to thereby provide a heated stream having a desired temperature; and

performing a phase separation of said heated stream to obtain a water phase having a water phase pH and said oil phase.

24. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 23, further comprising:

adding an amount of an acid to said emulsion prior to said step for performing said phase separation to thereby lower said water phase pH to a desired water phase pH.

25. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 24, further comprising:

measuring said water phase pH and therefrom determining said amount of said acid to be added to said emulsion by said adding step to provide said desired water phase pH.

26. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 25, wherein said acid is selected from the group consisting of sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, and acetic acid.

27. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 26, wherein said emulsion further comprises a concentration of a water soluble salt selected from the group consisting of salts of magnesium, calcium, sodium, and potassium.

28. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 27, wherein said emulsion further comprises a calcium content above 20 ppmw.

29. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 28, wherein said emulsion further comprises a magnesium content above 20 ppmw.

30. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 29, wherein said emulsion temperature is below 100 °C.

31. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 30, wherein said desired temperature is above 140 °C.

32. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 31, wherein said water phase pH is above 7 and said desired water phase pH is below 7.

33. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 32, wherein said desired water phase pH is in the range of from 4 to 6.

34. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 33, wherein said desired temperature is in the range of from 160 to 200 °C.

35. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 34, wherein said emulsion further comprises between 60 to 85 weight percent said bituminous oil, between 10 to 40 weight percent said water, and between 0.01 to 5 weight percent surfactant.

36. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 35, further comprising:

feeding a remaining part of said oil phase to gasification burner means with oxygen whereby a partial oxidation takes place to form a hot synthesis gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen.

37. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 36, further comprising:

lowering the temperature of said hot synthesis gas.

38. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 37, wherein said hot synthesis gas is at a temperature between 1300 °C to 1500 °C and the lowered temperature of said hot synthesis gas is between 300 to 350 °C.

39. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 38, wherein the lowering of said hot synthesis gas is done by indirect heat exchange means.

40. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 24, wherein said acid is selected from the group consisting of sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, and acetic acid.

41. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 40, wherein said emulsion further comprises a concentration of a water soluble salt selected from the group consisting of salts of magnesium, calcium, sodium, and potassium, wherein the calcium content is above 20 ppmw and the magnesium content is above 20 ppmw.

42. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 41, wherein said emulsion temperature is below 100 °C and said desired temperature is above 140 °C.

43. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 42, wherein said water phase pH is above 7 and said desired water phase pH is below 7.

44. (Previously presented) A process as recited in claim 43, wherein said desired water phase pH is in the range of from 4 to 6.

Claim 45 (canceled).